MARJORIE LIU
SANA TAKEDA
MONSTRESS
Image
ISSUE 14

THE MONSTRESS STORY SO FAR...

On the Isle of Bones, Maika finally learned a key detail about her mysterious past: her mother, Moriko, deliberately conceived Maika with an eye-marked descendant of the Shaman-Empress so that Maika could inherit the Shaman-Empress's power — and the Monstrum that now lives beneath her skin.

After that Monstrum, Zinn, devoured the crew of a Thyrian ship that had tried to apprehend Maika and her friends, Maika's allies helped her find temporary shelter in the refugee camp of Tear Shed in the waters outside Pontus, a city run by Edenites who believe in the peaceful coexistence of humans and Arcanics. There, Maika encountered a familiar figure — Lord Corvin of the Arcanic Dusk Court, whose loyalties remain ambiguous — and an unfamiliar figure — Vihn Nem, Royal Engineer of Pontus. While Maika remained suspicious of them both, Vihn presented Maika with a deal she and Zinn couldn't refuse: indefinite sanctuary in Pontus in exchange for the reactivation of the Pontus Shield, a task that can only be completed by a descendant of the Shaman-Empress.

THE PLAYERS...

MAIKA An Arcanic teen who survived the Great War, and slavery at the hands of the Cumaean witch nuns. Ruthless and haunted, she is determined to uncover the truth behind her mother's murder — and her mother's secrets — in the hope that she can free herself from an ancient and dangerous god called a Monstrum that is imprisoned inside her body and fills her with an otherworldly hunger for human flesh. In her current possession are two clues to her past: a photograph, and a fragment of a mask that many would kill to possess.

ZINN A mysterious, primordial Monstrum of tremendous power that shares Maika's body and mind, and fights her for control. Once considered a god, and drawn into this world by the Shaman-Empress, this Monstrum is driven by a deadly hunger, consuming the lives of humans and Arcanics alike, leaving only their desiccated corpses behind. Though it may give the impression that its only wish is to survive, there's far more to this creature, and its desires, than meets the eye…

REN An enigmatic nekomancer cat with mysterious motives, he is one of Maika's companions on her journey, and perhaps an agent of the Dusk Court — or some greater power.

KIPPA An Arcanic fox girl saved from slavery by Maika. Innocent and optimistic, she is frightened by the Monstrum — but trusts Maika and will bravely defend her and others by rushing into battles too dangerous for a child.

DESTRIA The Mother Superior of the Cumaean order and supposed creator of the Inquisitrixes. Unbeknownst to most, she is entirely controlled by a Monstrum who hopes to reignite the human-Arcanic war and bring more Monstra back to the Known World

THE CITY OF ORLEEN.
TWO WEEKS AGO.
YOU LOOK LIKE SHIT.

I ALMOST DIED, YOU FOOL. IT WAS MORIKO HALFWOLF'S DAUGHTER WHO STRUCK THE BLOW.
ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, THE BITCH HID FROM US THAT HER CHILD WAS AN INHERITOR.
SHE AWAKENED ZINN, AND I WAS NOT PREPARED.
ZINN LIVES? HOW REMARKABLE. DID OUR SISTER-BROTHER APPEAR WELL?
NOT WELL. MORTAL.
MORTAL, EH? AND STILL YOU LOST. YOU ALWAYS WERE THE WEAKER ONE.
WELL, WHILE YOU WERE HAVING YOUR LIP SPLIT BY SLEEPING BEAUTY, THE PRIME MINISTER HAS BEEN MEETING WITH THE NAVAL COMMANDERS -- WHO ARE NO FRIENDS OF OUR BELOVED ORDER.
POLITICS MUST WAIT. I AM GOING BACK AFTER THE GIRL AND THE BETRAYER.
NO, YOU WILL NOT.
WE HEW TO THE PLAN. OR DO YOU WISH TO UNRAVEL ALL OUR HARD WORK? WE WERE SO CLOSE UNTIL CONSTANTINE.
AND NOW THE WAR IS ONCE AGAIN WITHIN OUR GRASP.

YOU ARE UNDERESTIMATING THE THREAT THAT ZINN AND THE GIRL POSE. YOU WERE NOT THERE --
CAREFUL. YOU'RE SOUNDING A LITTLE MORTAL YOURSELF.
I'LL HUNT THE HALFWOLF.
YOU RETURN NORTH TO FINESSE THE PRIME MINISTER -- AND OUR OTHER PROJECT.
AND FOR NIGHT'S SAKE, EAT SOMETHING. THERE'S A BIG ONE ON THE RIGHT.
IS OLD DAGON AWAKE?
SHE'LL BE DOWN SOON. SHE'S TENDING DREAMER. HE'S WEAK. KEEPS SPITTING UP HIS MEALS.
DEMON... DEMON...
THESE BODIES NEVER SUITED HIM WELL.

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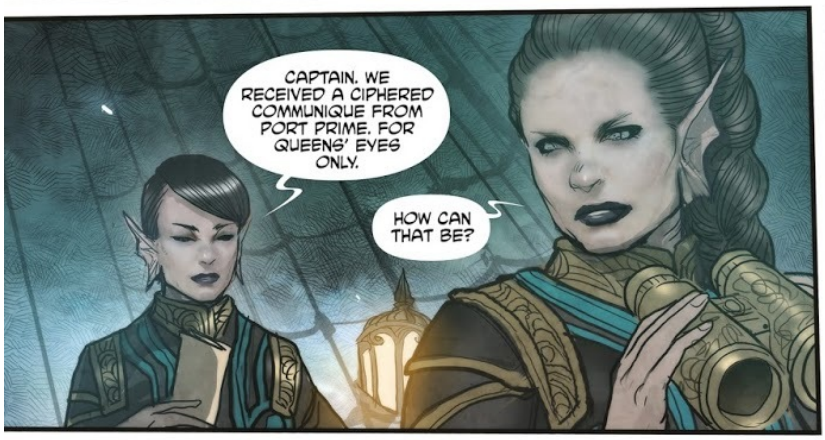
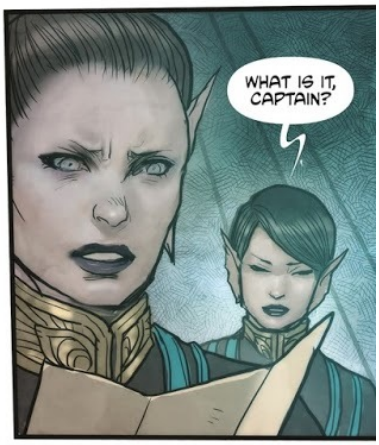
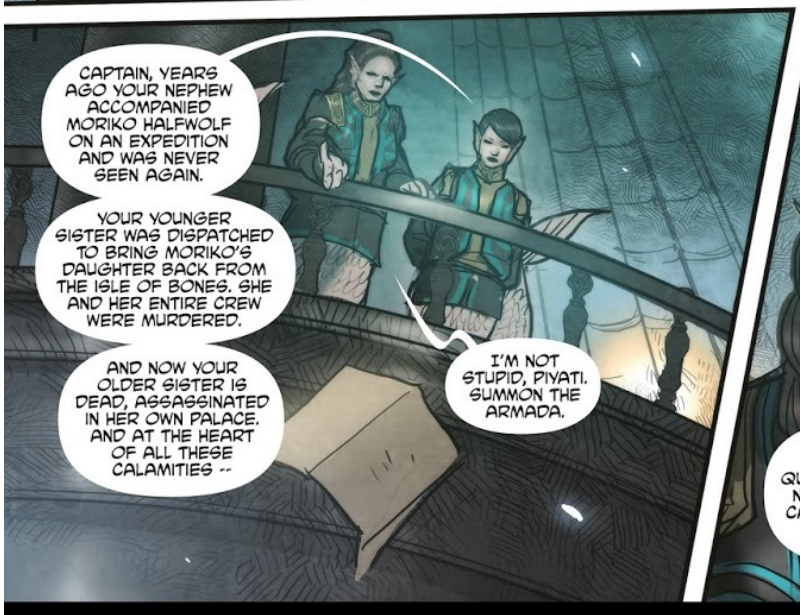
ZINN APPEARS TO HAVE NO SUCH TROUBLE WITH ITS HOST. AN UNCOMMON ACCOMPLISHMENT -- I WILL GIVE IT THAT --
GUUURRRK!
N-N-N-NOOO!
...NNNNNGGGHHH...
...NNNNNGGGHHH...
WELL. THAT WAS UNPLEASANT, BUT ALSO INFORMATIVE.
OLD DAGON... WHAT... PANT PANT WAS THAT?
GASP!
WOOF WOOF

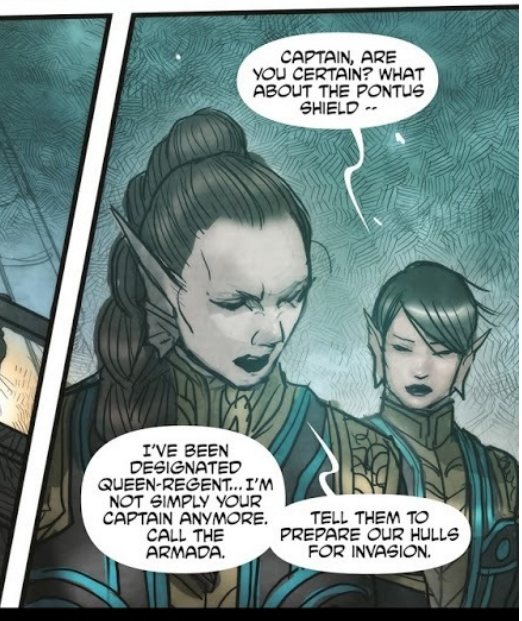
THE MASK WAS ACTIVATED.
I GLIMPSED TWO OF THE FRAGMENTS. A GIRL AT SEA. AND THE BLOOD QUEENS IN THYRIA. IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO DECIPHER THE OTHER PLACES I VISIONED.
THE GIRL IS THE HALFWOLF. I TOLD GULL, SHE IS A THREAT --
I HEARD YOUR BLATHER. YOUR SISTER-BROTHER IS RIGHT. GO NORTH. TEND TO THE FEDERATION. WE MUST HAVE THIS WAR.
GULL, TO THYRIA. SOMEHOW THE QUEENS HAVE FOUND ONE OF THE FRAGMENTS. USE YOUR INQUISITRIX TEAM TO FETCH IT, THEN FIND ZINN.
OUR PLANS ARE RIPENING.
OUR MISTAKE BEFORE WAS RELYING ON A SINGLE DESIGN. WE MUST PURSUE MANY ENDS IF WE ARE TO *BE* ONCE MORE.
THE EYE... IS STRONG... SISTER...
...BEWARE...
LISTEN TO DREAMER! AND DO NOT PLAY WITH ZINN.
MY YOUNGER SIBLING IS TRICKIER THAN IT LOOKS.
HUH. BUT NOT NEARLY AS RUTHLESS, AS I RECALL. DESPITE ITS CRIMES.
I ASSURE YOU... I'LL BE QUITE FINE.





MY ROYAL SISTER IS DEAD. ASSASSINATED BY CUMAEAN INQUISITRIXES IN HER OWN BATH. HER CONSORT IS SEVERELY WOUNDED.
THE WITCHES TOOK THAT RIDICULOUS MASK FRAGMENT MY SISTER THOUGHT WOULD SAVE THYRIA. POOR ALAYA. SHE COULDN'T EVEN SAVE HERSELF.
GODDESS, HAS THE WAR ALREADY BEGUN?
OUR TRACKERS LOST THE INQUISITRIXES, BUT IT'S BELIEVED THEY WERE HEADING FOR PONTUS.
WHERE THE HALFWOLF IS?


CAPTAIN, YEARS AGO YOUR NEPHEW ACCOMPANIED MORIKO HALFWOLF ON AN EXPEDITION AND WAS NEVER SEEN AGAIN.
YOUR YOUNGER SISTER WAS DISPATCHED TO BRING MORIKO'S DAUGHTER BACK FROM THE ISLE OF BONES. SHE AND HER ENTIRE CREW WERE MURDERED.
AND NOW YOUR OLDER SISTER IS DEAD, ASSASSINATED IN HER OWN PALACE. AND AT THE HEART OF ALL THESE CALAMITIES --
I'M NOT STUPID, PIYATI. SUMMON THE ARMADA.


CAPTAIN, ARE YOU CERTAIN? WHAT ABOUT THE PONTUS SHIELD --
I'VE BEEN DESIGNATED QUEEN-REGENT... I'M NOT SIMPLY YOUR CAPTAIN ANYMORE. CALL THE ARMADA.
TELL THEM TO PREPARE OUR HULLS FOR INVASION.

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PONTUS.
Do you remember, Tuya, how all us slaves fantasized about escaping to Pontus?
The Shielded City. Untouched by war. Where humans and Arcanics lived together in peace.
Safe. Whole. Fed.
A paradise in the bowels of hell.
It's more beautiful than I imagined, Tuya.
WHY DID YOU INSIST WE COME HERE?
...CHILD... YOU HAVE SOME TALENT... FOR MURDER...
...BUT... WHEN IT COMES... TO SURVIVAL... YOU ARE LOST... AT SEA...

...WE ARE HERE... BECAUSE YOU CANNOT... FIGHT ...ALONE...
...YOU CANNOT... SURVIVE... ALONE...
YOU'RE SAYING I NEED ALLIES.
...ALLIES ARE NOT... WITHOUT... THEIR USES...
...AND YOU CAN... ALWAYS... EAT THEM... WHEN THEIR USEFULNESS... IS DONE...
GO BACK TO SLEEP.
THERE'S NOTHING HERE FOR YOU TO EAT.
...ON SHORE... I SPY A TEMPLE... TO THE OLD GODS... THOSE FAITHFUL PRIESTESSES... MIGHT BE WILLING... TO OFFER THEMSELVES... IN SACRIFICE...
I FEAR THEY WOULD BARELY RECOGNIZE YOU, OH LORD OF ENDLESS SHADOWS. THE MEMORIES OF THE DEVOUT ARE SADLY VERY LIMITED.
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS... AND YOU'RE NOT TERRIFIED?
MY DEAR HALFWOLF, I RESERVE ACTUAL TERROR FOR ONLY THE MOST SPECIAL OF OCCASIONS.

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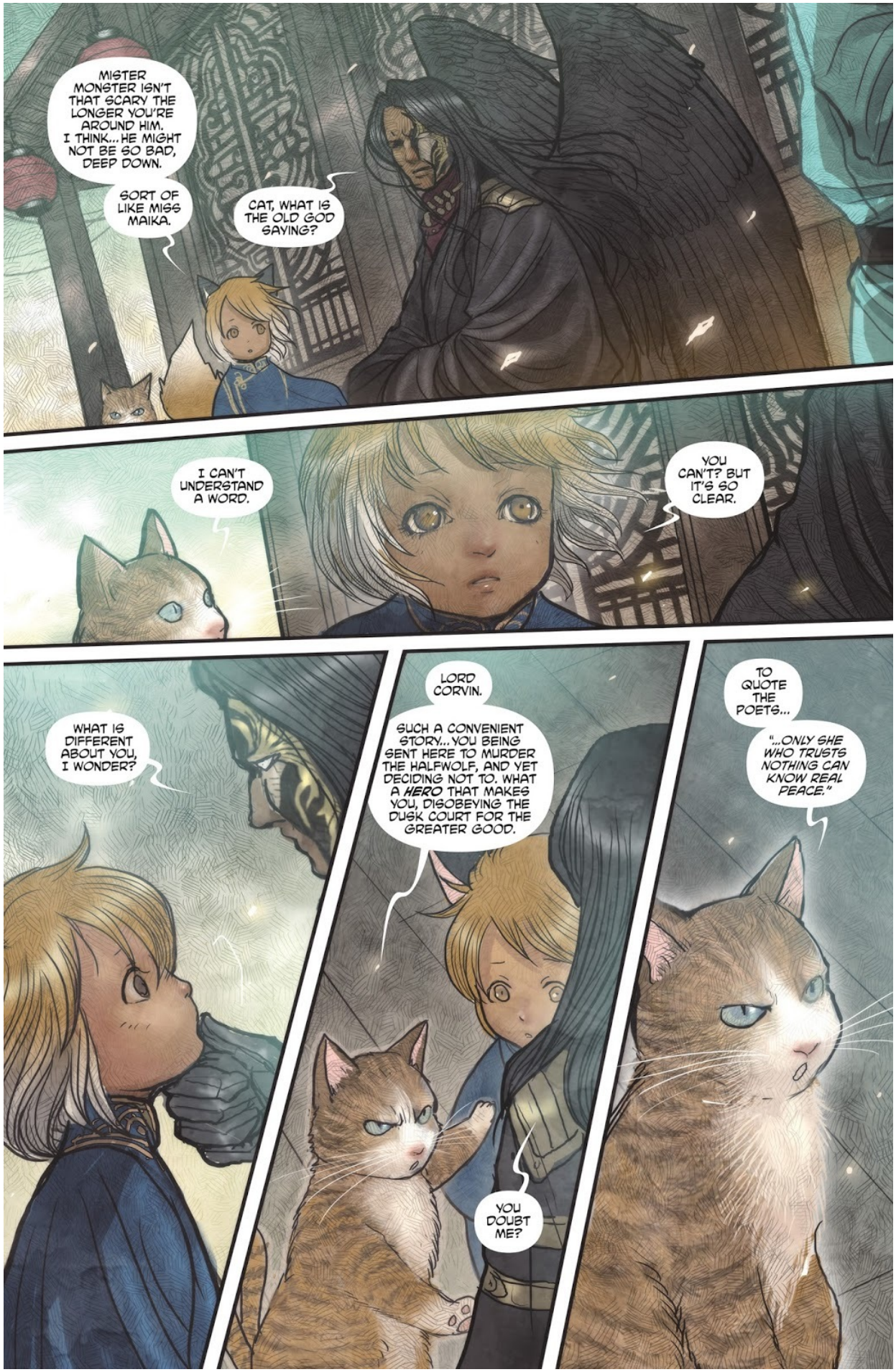
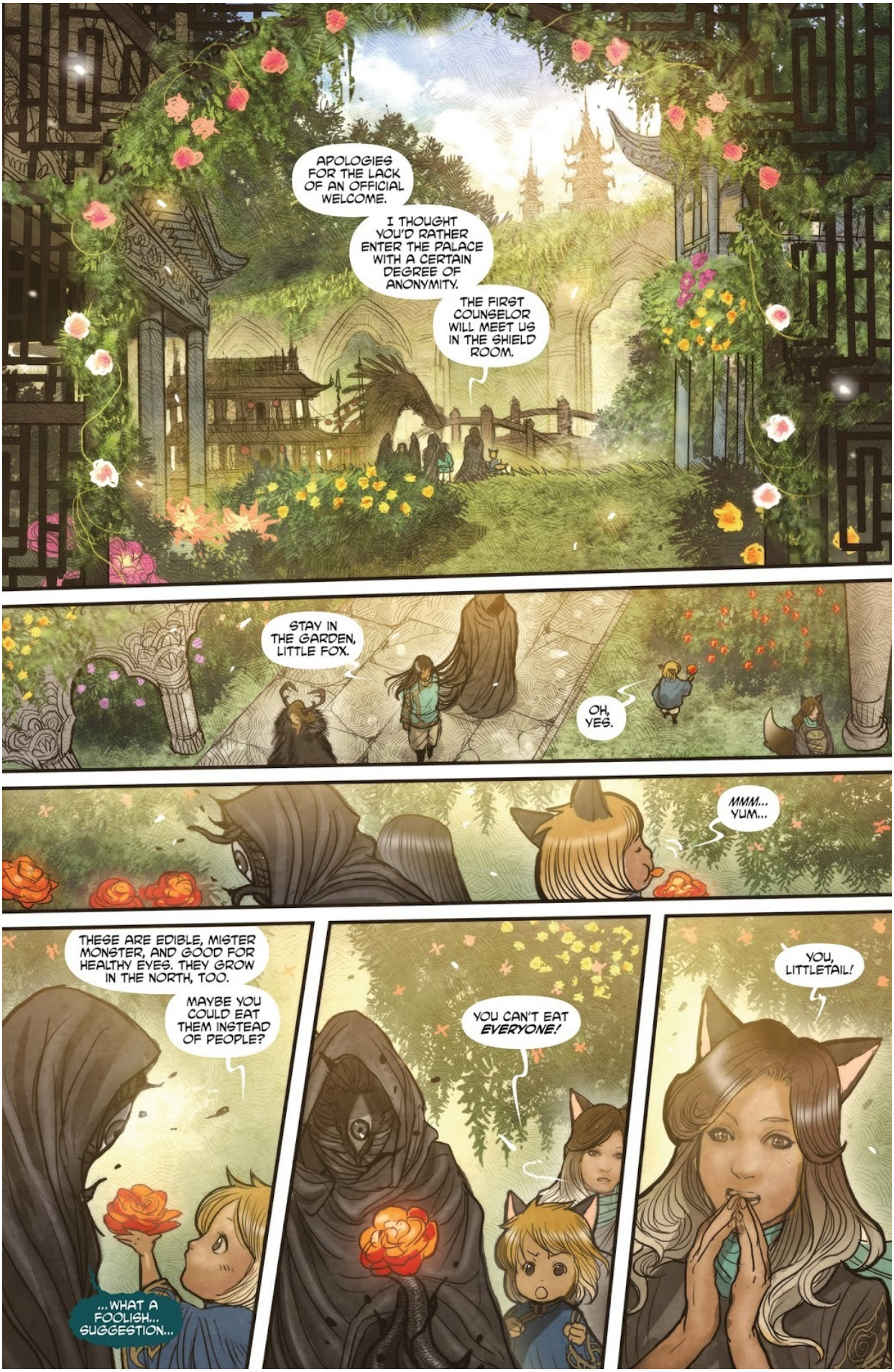
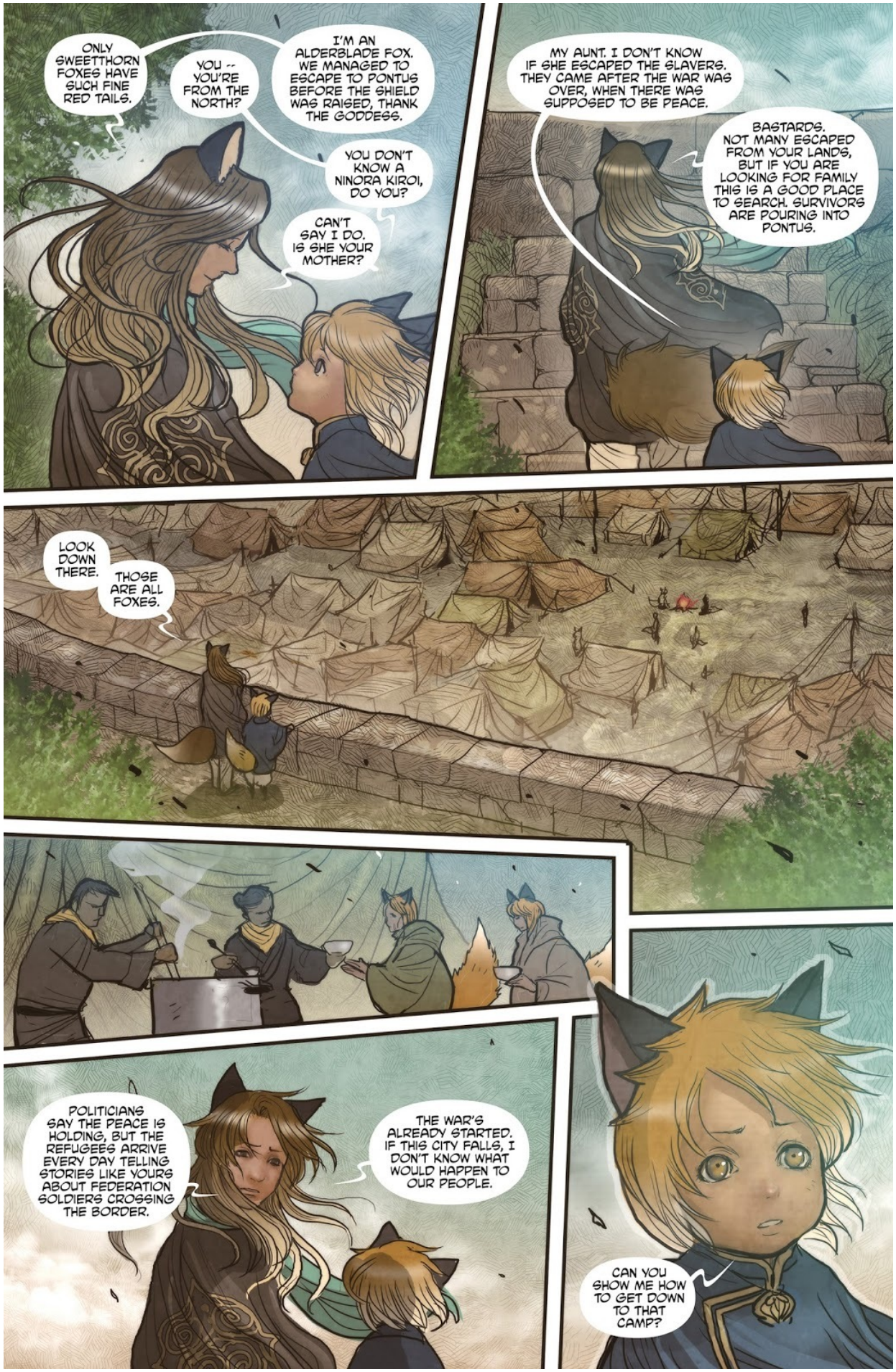
...PERHAPS... TERROR... WILL COME... SOONER... THAN YOU EXPECT...
...THAT GOD... DO YOU SEE... HOW ITS EYE... TURNS...?
...IT FEELS ME HERE... IT WATCHES...
SO WHAT?
...THE PRISON... IS WEAKENING...
DO ALL THESE OLD GODS HATE YOU AS MUCH AS THE ONE INSIDE THE MOTHER SUPERIOR DOES?
THE MOTHER SUPERIOR, HMM?
...PERHAPS I SHOULD... NEVER HAVE...
...AWAKENED...
BUT YOU ARE AWAKE. WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.
THOUGH I DO SUGGEST YOU CONTINUE... HIDING YOURSELF BENEATH THESE ROBES.
EVEN IN THIS MOST ENLIGHTENED OF CITIES... YOUR FORM MIGHT CAUSE SOME ALARM.
SO THERE'S A LIMIT TO EDENITE ACCEPTANCE? WHAT A SHOCK.

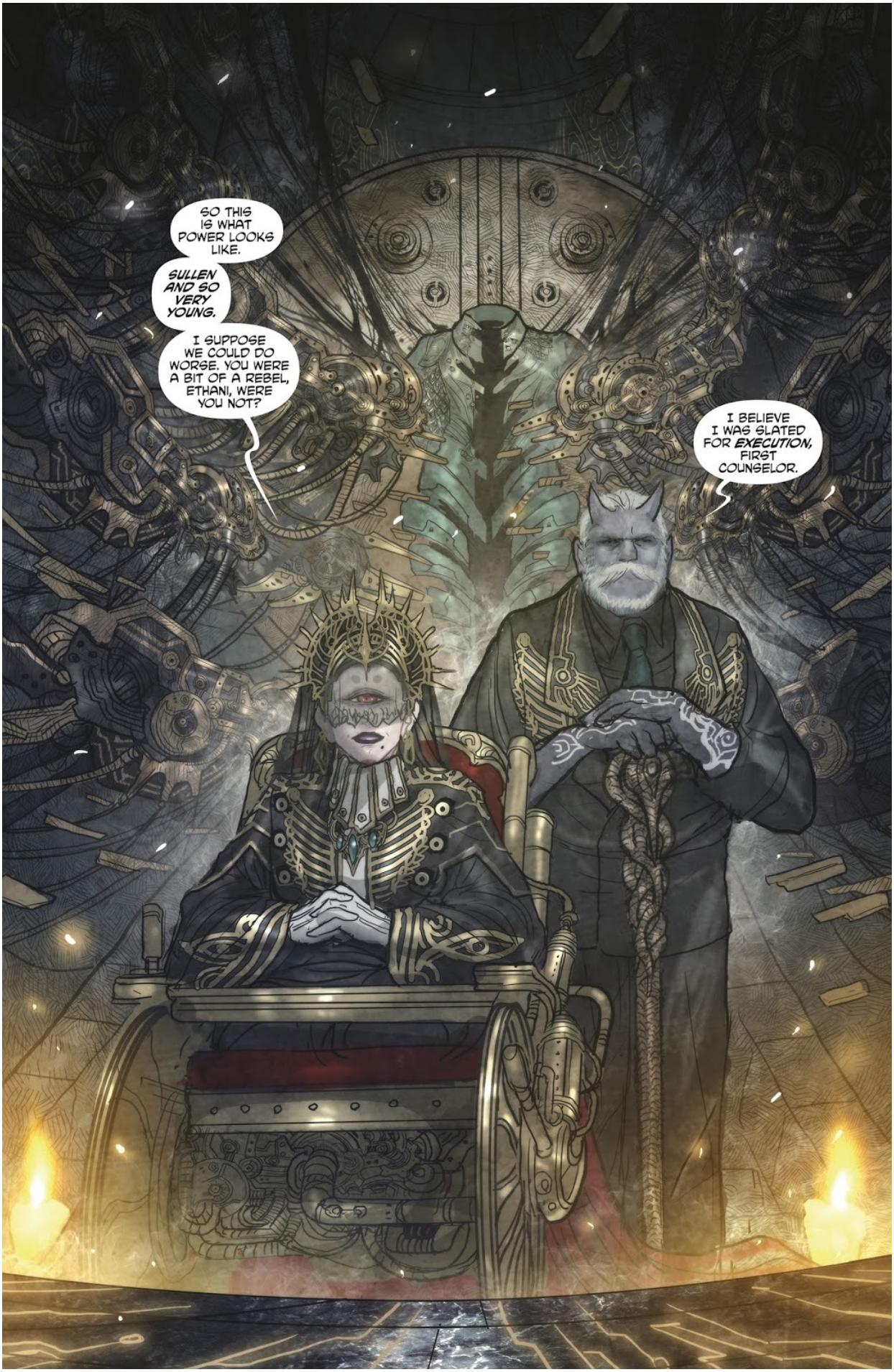

MISTER MONSTER ISN'T THAT SCARY THE LONGER YOU'RE AROUND HIM. I THINK... HE MIGHT NOT BE SO BAD, DEEP DOWN.
SORT OF LIKE MISS MAIKA.
CAT, WHAT IS THE OLD GOD SAYING?
I CAN'T UNDERSTAND A WORD.
YOU CAN'T? BUT IT'S SO CLEAR.
WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU, I WONDER?
LORD CORVIN.
SUCH A CONVENIENT STORY... YOU BEING SENT HERE TO MURDER THE HALFWOLF, AND YET DECIDING NOT TO. WHAT A *HERO* THAT MAKES YOU, DISOBEYING THE DUSK COURT FOR THE GREATER GOOD.
YOU DOUBT ME?
TO QUOTE THE POETS...
"...ONLY SHE WHO TRUSTS NOTHING CAN KNOW REAL PEACE."


APOLOGIES FOR THE LACK OF AN OFFICIAL WELCOME.
I THOUGHT YOU'D RATHER ENTER THE PALACE WITH A CERTAIN DEGREE OF ANONYMITY.
THE FIRST COUNSELOR WILL MEET US IN THE SHIELD ROOM.
STAY IN THE GARDEN, LITTLE FOX.
OH, YES.
MMM... YUM...
THESE ARE EDIBLE, MISTER MONSTER, AND GOOD FOR HEALTHY EYES. THEY GROW IN THE NORTH, TOO.
MAYBE YOU COULD EAT THEM INSTEAD OF PEOPLE?
...WHAT A FOOLISH... SUGGESTION...
YOU CAN'T EAT *EVERYONE!*
YOU, LITTLETAIL!


ONLY SWEETTHORN FOXES HAVE SUCH FINE RED TAILS.
YOU -- YOU'RE FROM THE NORTH?
I'M AN ALDERBLADE FOX. WE MANAGED TO ESCAPE TO PONTUS BEFORE THE SHIELD WAS RAISED, THANK THE GODDESS.
YOU DON'T KNOW A NINORA KIROI, DO YOU?
CAN'T SAY I DO. IS SHE YOUR MOTHER?
MY AUNT. I DON'T KNOW IF SHE ESCAPED THE SLAVERS. THEY CAME AFTER THE WAR WAS OVER, WHEN THERE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE PEACE.
BASTARDS. NOT MANY ESCAPED FROM YOUR LANDS, BUT IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR FAMILY THIS IS A GOOD PLACE TO SEARCH. SURVIVORS ARE POURING INTO PONTUS.
LOOK DOWN THERE.
THOSE ARE ALL FOXES.
POLITICIANS SAY THE PEACE IS HOLDING, BUT THE REFUGEES ARRIVE EVERY DAY TELLING STORIES LIKE YOURS ABOUT FEDERATION SOLDIERS CROSSING THE BORDER.
THE WAR'S ALREADY STARTED. IF THIS CITY FALLS, I DON'T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO OUR PEOPLE.
CAN YOU SHOW ME HOW TO GET DOWN TO THAT CAMP?

...MY MEMORIES...
...WE LIVED... HERE... SHE AND I... FOR A TIME...
YOU DON'T SEEM LIKE THE DOMESTIC TYPE.
...IT WAS... NECESSARY...
REN, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO WAIT. EXPLORE THE PALACE, IF YOU GROW BORED.
THERE'S AN ANCIENT UBASTI SHRINE FROM THE PRE-EMPRESS ERA. AS A NEKOMANCER, YOU MIGHT HAVE SOME INTEREST IN THE BONES OF THE SACRIFICES STILL EMBEDDED IN THE STONE.
I'D RATHER SEE THE SHIELD. FEW CATS HAVE HAD THE --
AND YOU, LORD CORVIN, WILL HAVE TO WAIT, AS WELL.
THE DUSK COURT NO DOUBT HAS ITS OWN INTERESTS IN THE SHIELD. WHY PROVOKE ANY TEMPTATION ON YOUR PART?

LADY HALFWOLF.
NO MATTER WHAT VIHN SAYS, YOU SHOULDN'T GO IN THERE ALONE. EVEN IF YOU ARE ACCOMPANIED... BY IT.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
THANK YOU, LORD CORVIN, FOR YOUR CONCERN.
VIHN. I REQUIRE THE CAT.
DELIGHTFUL. I'M NOT A FAN OF SHRINES, ANYWAY.


SO THIS IS WHAT POWER LOOKS LIKE.
SULLEN AND SO VERY YOUNG.
I SUPPOSE WE COULD DO WORSE. YOU WERE A BIT OF A REBEL, ETHANI, WERE YOU NOT?
I BELIEVE I WAS SLATED FOR EXECUTION, FIRST COUNSELOR.

FIRST COUNSELOR FONG OF PONTUS, AND OUR SHIELD-MASTER, ETHAN! SOOK.
I WOULD LIKE TO PRESENT LADY MAIKA HALFWOLF. AND TRUSTED FRIENDS.
A PLEASURE.
REALLY?
OF COURSE NOT. WE'VE HEARD ABOUT YOUR ATROCITIES IN THYRIA.
BUT I'D MAKE A BARGAIN WITH ANY DEVIL TO KEEP PONTUS FROM FALLING.
ENEMIES *AND* ALLIES BOTH WOULD LOVE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF OUR SHIELD TECHNOLOGY.
WHICH THEY WILL MOST CERTAINLY ATTEMPT TO DO IF THEY DISCOVER IT'S INOPERABLE.
THE SHIELD APPARATUS IS HUGE, THOUGH. I HARDLY IMAGINE ANYONE WOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE IT FROM THIS CHAMBER.
...DEAR GODDESS... WHAT IS THAT BETWEEN YOU...
I WOULDN'T DO THAT, IF I WERE YOU.
VIHN.
WHAT HAVE YOU FAILED TO TELL ME?
...LADY HALFWOLF HAS UNDERGONE A *TRANSFORMATION* SINCE I LAST INFORMED YOU OF HER EXISTENCE.

OH GODDESS, IT CAN'T BE.
MY... GOODNESS. THIS IS... MOMENTOUS.
BUT IT'S NOT QUITE THE SOLUTION I HOPED FOR, VIHN.
A DEAL IS A DEAL. YOU WANTED A DESCENDANT OF THE SHAMAN-EMPRESS? I'D SAY YOU STRUCK GOLD.
SO WHO'S GOING TO TELL ME HOW TO TURN THIS THING ON?
ONE DOES NOT SIMPLY *TURN ON* THE SHIELD. ACTIVATION IS A DELICATE PROCESS, ONE THAT REQUIRES INCREDIBLE FOCUS.
NOT ONLY MUST THE MACHINE BECOME *ACCUSTOMED* TO YOUR BLOOD, YOU'LL NEED TO UNDERGO WEEKS OF MEDITATIVE TRAINING --
WHAT THE FUCK, OLD MAN. I COULD BE DEAD BY THEN. AND YOU CERTAINLY WILL BE, BY THE LOOKS OF YOU.
...THE CHILD... IS RIGHT...
...THERE IS... NO TIME... FOR CAUTION...

VIHN... DID YOU REALLY HAVE TO DEPOSIT THE FRUITS OF THAT FRIGHTFUL PROPHECY IN MY LAP?
YOU'VE PUT US IN MORE DANGER.
MORE DANGER THAN THE CUMAEA?
THE POLITICAL SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED, FIRST COUNSELOR. THE BORDER WARDENS WILL DO THEIR BEST TO HOLD BACK THE FEDERATION NAVY, BUT THE LAND THREATS COULD BE CONSIDERABLE.
=COUGH=
BLARRGH
FORGIVE THE INSIGHTS OF A MERE NEKOMANCER, VIHN, BUT THE FIRST COUNSELOR IS CORRECT.
THE HALFWOLF'S BLOOD IS AWAKE. IF THAT'S NOT DANGEROUS ENOUGH, OTHERS WILL COME FOR HER.
DO YOU KNOW HOW THIS THING WORKS?
...YOU... CLIMB... INTO THE ARMOR...
THAT'S IT? WHAT ABOUT THE WEEKS OF MEDITATION?
...YOU... MEDITATE...?
...I FIND MYSELF... WITH AN URGE... TO LAUGH...

YOU SURE YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO KILL ME?
THE OLD MAN --
FUCK!
NO! YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE DOING!
OH, MY. THAT WAS A STRONGER REACTION THAN I EXPECTED.
...I TOLD YOU... HOW...
...I DID NOT SAY... YOU SHOULD...
YOU... BASTARD...
THE ARMOR MUST POSSESS YOU, HALFWOLF!
DO NOT RESIST! DO NOT FIGHT IT!
...NO...
...NO...

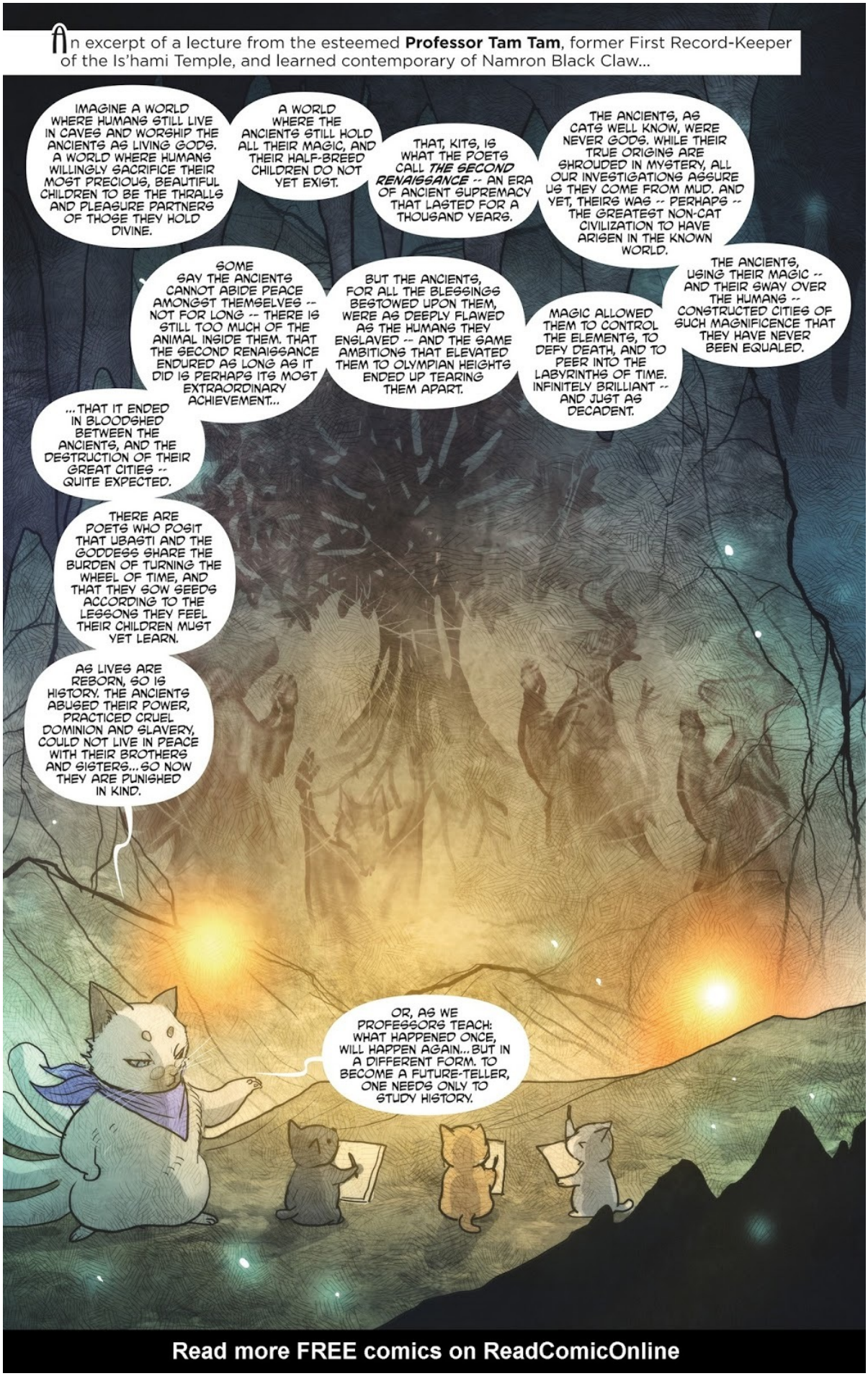
NO!
CRAAAACK!
CRAAAACK!
...YES...
BAM!
LADY HALFWOLF --
BEHIND ME!
THE SHIELD IS GOING TO EXPLODE!

...FINALLY...
WZZSSHHZ
WZZSSHHZ
WZZSSHHZ
WZZSSHHZ

WHAT STRANGE MIND FASHIONED YOU?
IT'S AS IF... I CAN HEAR... OUR SISTER-BROTHERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE... AND THEIR SONGS ARE SO SAD...
COMMANDER.
THYRIAN FORCES WILL CATCH US WITHIN THE HOUR IF WE DON'T KEEP RIDING.
COMMANDER?
COULD THAT BE NERVOUSNESS I DETECT IN YOUR VOICE, NEEDLE?
I AM MERELY STATING FACTS.
RIDE AHEAD. I'LL TAKE CARE OF OUR PURSUERS.
I WONDER...

YES... YES... I CAN HEAR YOU!
SO CLOSE... YOU ARE ALL... SO CLOSE...
WAIT...
WHAT... ARE... YOU... NNNGH... DOING...?
...THIS... THIS IS MY... NNNGH... FLESH... YOU CANNOT... MAKE ME...
AAAAHHHHH!!!
EXCELLENT.
TO BE CONTINUED...

An excerpt of a lecture from the esteemed **Professor Tam Tam**, former First Record-Keeper of the Is'hami Temple, and learned contemporary of Namron Black Claw...


IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE HUMANS STILL LIVE IN CAVES AND WORSHIP THE ANCIENTS AS LIVING GODS. A WORLD WHERE HUMANS WILLINGLY SACRIFICE THEIR MOST PRECIOUS, BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN TO BE THE THRALLS AND PLEASURE PARTNERS OF THOSE THEY HOLD DIVINE.
A WORLD WHERE THE ANCIENTS STILL HOLD ALL THEIR MAGIC, AND THEIR HALF-BREED CHILDREN DO NOT YET EXIST.
THAT, KITS, IS WHAT THE POETS CALL ***THE SECOND RENAISSANCE*** -- AN ERA OF ANCIENT SUPREMACY THAT LASTED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS.
THE ANCIENTS, AS CATS WELL KNOW, WERE NEVER GODS. WHILE THEIR TRUE ORIGINS ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY, ALL OUR INVESTIGATIONS ASSURE US THEY COME FROM MUD. AND YET, THEIRS WAS -- PERHAPS -- THE GREATEST NON-CAT CIVILIZATION TO HAVE ARISEN IN THE KNOWN WORLD.
THE ANCIENTS, USING THEIR MAGIC -- AND THEIR SWAY OVER THE HUMANS -- CONSTRUCTED CITIES OF SUCH MAGNIFICENCE THAT THEY HAVE NEVER BEEN EQUALED.
MAGIC ALLOWED THEM TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS, TO DEFY DEATH, AND TO PEER INTO THE LABYRINTHS OF TIME. INFINITELY BRILLIANT -- AND JUST AS DECADENT.
BUT THE ANCIENTS, FOR ALL THE BLESSINGS BESTOWED UPON THEM, WERE AS DEEPLY FLAWED AS THE HUMANS THEY ENSLAVED -- AND THE SAME AMBITIONS THAT ELEVATED THEM TO OLYMPIAN HEIGHTS ENDED UP TEARING THEM APART.
SOME SAY THE ANCIENTS CANNOT ABIDE PEACE AMONGST THEMSELVES -- NOT FOR LONG -- THERE IS STILL TOO MUCH OF THE ANIMAL INSIDE THEM. THAT THE SECOND RENAISSANCE ENDURED AS LONG AS IT DID IS PERHAPS ITS MOST EXTRAORDINARY ACHIEVEMENT...
...THAT IT ENDED IN BLOODSHED BETWEEN THE ANCIENTS, AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THEIR GREAT CITIES -- QUITE EXPECTED.
THERE ARE POETS WHO POSIT THAT UBASTI AND THE GODDESS SHARE THE BURDEN OF TURNING THE WHEEL OF TIME, AND THAT THEY SOW SEEDS ACCORDING TO THE LESSONS THEY FEEL THEIR CHILDREN MUST YET LEARN.
AS LIVES ARE REBORN, SO IS HISTORY. THE ANCIENTS ABUSED THEIR POWER, PRACTICED CRUEL DOMINION AND SLAVERY, COULD NOT LIVE IN PEACE WITH THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS... SO NOW THEY ARE PUNISHED IN KIND.
OR, AS WE PROFESSORS TEACH: WHAT HAPPENED ONCE, WILL HAPPEN AGAIN... BUT IN A DIFFERENT FORM. TO BECOME A FUTURE-TELLER, ONE NEEDS ONLY TO STUDY HISTORY.

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LETTERS, FAN ART & OTHER CRAFTS

Hello, MONSTRESS Makers!

I have to admit that I've never written in like this before. Like a number of comics that I'm still reading now, I picked up MONSTRESS #1 because I thought the cover looked rad (I did the same thing with *Low* and fell just as madly in love). What unfurled in the pages beyond that eye-catching cover ticked every box that I had in my mind. I absolutely adore the world, the characters and the lore that you've created and brought to life. Thank you!

I'm a composer and sound designer, and I found that Issue #10 really stuck with me. So much so that I sat down at my computer and began to score what I thought some of it might sound like. This is the result of that process: https://soundcloud.com/epicbearconcepts/the-ferryman

The piece is a bit of a slow build, but I hope you'll stick with it. Thank you for the inspiration and thank you for the incredible work you all share with us every month.

Love,
Jameson B.

Jameson! Oh, my Goddess! Ubasti praise you! I can't even begin to tell you how much we love your score for Issue #10. Beautiful, haunting, you captured the spirit of the story through your music. We hope everyone listens to it, particularly while reading the book.

Thank you, too, for the kind words. You more or less rendered us speechless, and that doesn't happen often.

- Marjorie

Dear Marjorie Liu,

Just read MONSTRESS #1 and I wanna thank you for the experience. I also stumbled at your words at the end of issue one to readers how this all started because you imagined a girl suffering. The concept alone led you to write this story. After reading that I immediately connected with what you said. Then you spoke of making plans with Sana and I wanna ask, what is it that led you to publish your comic? Is there a place where I can read the process of how you became a comic book writer? I know I desire to become one, but it's difficult and rare. A guidance or following in your footsteps may help me and that would be much appreciated.

Olaf L.

Olaf, thank you so much for reaching out. What led us to create MONSTRESS? There were a lot of things, really – a desire to collaborate with Sana again, and vice versa – a long-term dream of mine to write an epic fantasy – a need to write about that girl and her survival. There are interviews online where I go into it at more length, including how I became a writer; this one with Guernica is a good place to start...

https://www.guernicamag.com/making-a-monstress/

And this interview with Sana Takeda, as well:

http://sktchd.com/art-feature/sana-takeda-on-the-beauty-and-darkness-of-monstress/

Becoming a professional writer – finding a publisher, making a living from it – is very difficult. But not impossible. It requires a great deal of stubbornness and hard work, and a thick skin against rejection. I was a feverish reader – I read everything I could get my hands on, growing up – and I wrote and wrote and wrote. I wrote horribly – I was so awful when I first started telling stories – but I kept at it, and I learned each time I wrote horribly. Until, eventually, I stopped being horrible and graduated to mediocre. And, after quite a few years, mediocre became...okay...and now sometimes I think I've graduated to "good", but that's rare, and depends on the day. The thing is, I've never stopped being hungry to learn, and improve. I think that's important, too – to never be satisfied with "good enough" but to keep pushing for more.

I hope this helps, and good luck with everything. Fortunately, there are a ton of online resources for writers.

- Marjorie

Mary Hanson

▲ **Denise Kuan**

James McIlwraith
Twitter: @THG_Nanaimo

Tattoo by: Ryan Holden at Tranceformations
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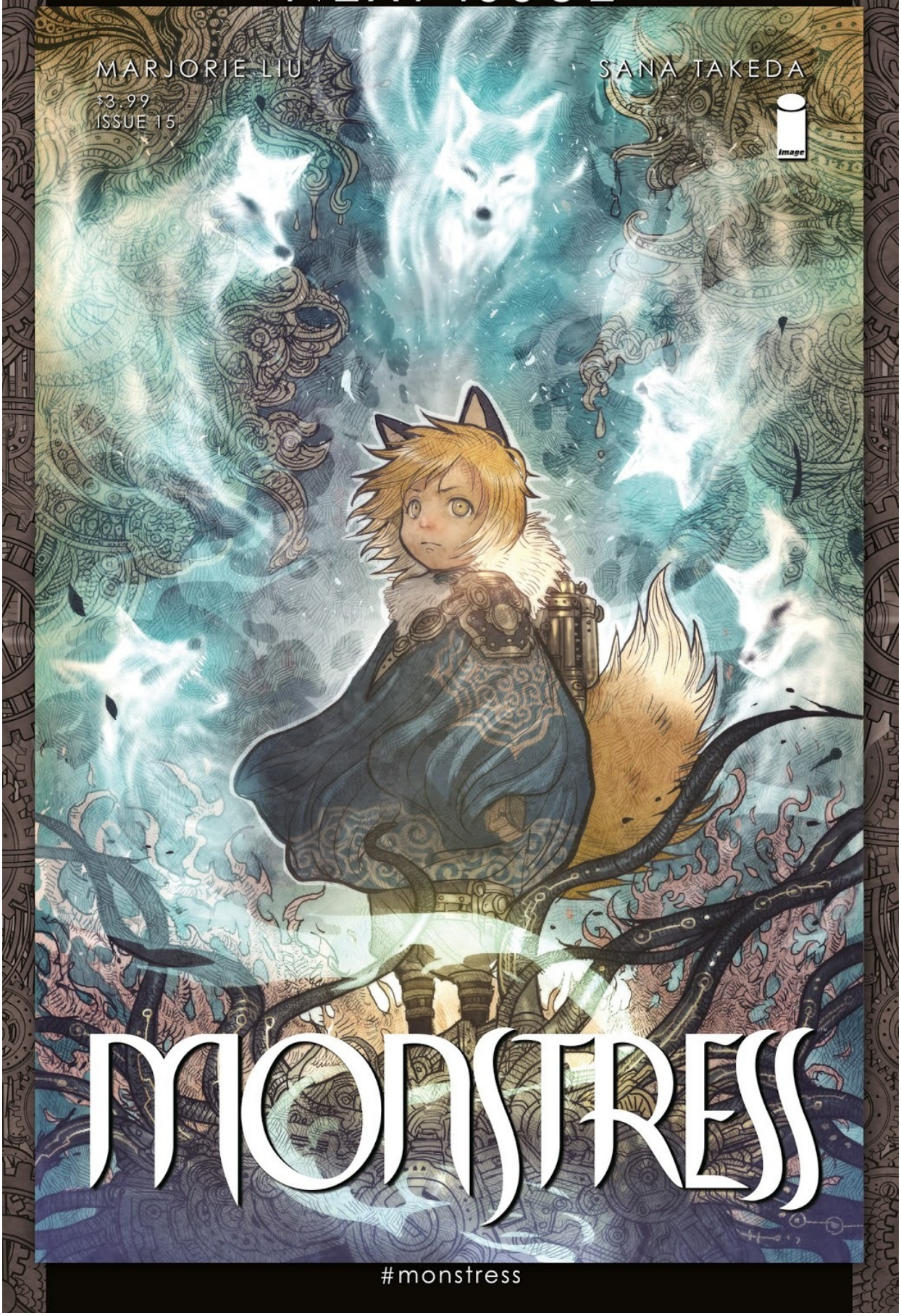
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